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Wednesday, 26 July 2000, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Miss Durrant	(Jamaica)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Listre
	Bangladesh	Mr. Chowdhury
	Canada	Mr. Fowler
	China	Mr. Shen Guofang
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Malaysia	Mr. Hasmy
	Mali	Mr. Ag Oumar
	Namibia	Mr. Andjaba
	Netherlands	Mr. Hamer
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	Tunisia	Mr. Jerandi
	Ukraine	Mr. Krokhmal
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the implementation of resolution 1261 (1999) on children and armed conflict (S/2000/712).

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

00-55232 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the implementation of resolution 1261 (1999) on children and armed conflict (S/2000/712)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Austria, Barbados, Colombia, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Japan, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, Nepal, New Zealand, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and the United Republic of Tanzania, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria), Miss Clarke (Barbados), Mr. Franco (Colombia), Mr. Alemán (Ecuador), Mr. Sharma (India), Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia), Mr. Hasan (Iraq), Mr. Akasaka (Japan), Mr. Kuindwa (Kenya), Mr. Mangoaela (Lesotho), Mr. Santos (Mozambique), Mr. Sharma (Nepal), Mr. Powles (New Zealand), Mr. Mbanefo (Nigeria), Mr. Ka (Senegal), Mr. Kumalo (South Africa) and Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Otunnu to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Ms. Bellamy to take a seat at the Council table.

Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the Security Council decides to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mrs. Sylvie Junod, Head of the delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross to the United Nations

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 24 July 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations, which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour, in my capacity as Chairman of the Islamic Group of the United Nations, to request that the Security Council extend an invitation under rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Council to Mokhtar Lamani, Permanent Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations, during the Council's discussion on children and armed conflict."

That letter has been issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2000/734.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Lamani.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2000/712, which contains the text of a report by the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1261 (1999) on children and armed conflict.

I call on the Deputy Secretary-General.

The Deputy Secretary-General: Let me first thank you, Madam President, for convening this open debate of the Security Council on children and armed conflict.

The problem which brings us here today is one of the most disturbing human security issues facing the international community. It is also a great challenge to the United Nations, one which is close to the heart of the Secretary-General. He therefore deeply regrets being unable to attend this important debate, which he intended to open personally, and he has asked me to convey his appreciation and full support for this timely initiative.

Almost a year ago, the Security Council adopted resolution 1261 (1991), which places the issue of children and armed conflict on the peace and security agenda. That resolution has strengthened the advocacy work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and of the United Nations Children's Fund. It has also enhanced the United Nations ability to implement programmes on the ground in affected countries.

It is time to reflect on the progress we have made and to examine how best to move forward with the protection of children in war-torn nations. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which focuses on the involvement of children in armed conflict, has finally been adopted and is now open for signature and ratification by Member States. Child Protection Advisers are deployed in Sierra Leone and in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Despite these positive developments, the task ahead is still enormous. Children in many corners of the world — in Sierra Leone, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in Angola, in Sri Lanka or in East Timor, to name but a few — continue to be killed, maimed, sexually abused, recruited into armed forces or deprived of life-saving humanitarian assistance.

The Secretary-General's report, which the Council is about to consider, contains a comprehensive review of issues related to the protection of the rights of children affected by armed conflicts and a series of specific and targeted recommendations for action.

Mr. Olara Otunnu and Ms. Carol Bellamy, who between them spearhead the work of the United Nations system in protecting children in conflict, will brief the Council in much greater detail. The abuse of children in armed conflict, as everywhere else, is unacceptable. We can and must do much more to make our world safer for all of them.

I am confident that today's debate on this most pressing issue will be fruitful and that the Council will show the necessary political leadership in the fight against those who exploit children. This is a cause which concerns all of us, for children represent the hope and the future of the world.

The President: I now call on the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu.

Mr. Otunnu: I warmly salute your leadership and your commitment to this issue, Madam President. Your country, Jamaica, has always been a leader, spearheading the struggles for freedom, social justice and international solidarity. It is also to your country that the international community owes its heritage of that very special form of musical expression, reggae.

The Security Council's systematic engagement with the issue of children and armed conflict began with the open debate and presidential statement of June 1998. Last year, the Council took a momentous step when it adopted resolution 1261 (1999), which, as the Secretary-General indicates in his report, document S/2000/712, represents a veritable landmark for the cause of children affected by armed conflict.

Today marks another milestone in this engagement. For the first time ever, the Council has received a report from the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. The report has some very important features: it contains a comprehensive overview of the fate of children caught in conflict; it draws on specific, concrete activities from the field; it traces the progress made thus far, as well as indicating the challenges that lie ahead; and it provides a comprehensive set of recommendations, many of which are addressed directly to the Security Council.

As the report indicates, in the course of the last two years we have witnessed significant progress on

this agenda: the level of public awareness has increased significantly; after almost six years of difficult negotiations, a consensus agreement was reached last January raising the minimum age for compulsory recruitment and deployment from 15 to 18. Several regional organizations have come to adopt this agenda as their own, the most recent actions in that regard being those of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Group of Eight.

Other elements of this progress are: child protection concerns are now being systematically incorporated into peace operation mandates by the Security Council; reports to the Security Council on specific conflict situations now contain distinct sections on the protection and well-being of children; the establishment of the role and the deployment of Child Protection Advisors; the placing of children's concerns on peace agendas, as we have seen in Sierra Leone, Colombia and Burundi; the elaboration of training programmes for peacekeepers in the domain of the rights and protection of children and women; the increasing and widespread engagement of non-governmental organizations in advocacy work, the provision of information and programme activities on the ground; increasing focus and resource allocation for children in post-conflict situations, as we are witnessing in East Timor, Sierra Leone and Kosovo; and some innovative national initiatives on behalf of war-affected children, such as the National Commission for War Affected Children in Sierra Leone, and the enactment of a new law in Rwanda which opened the way for girls to inherit land and other property in the aftermath of a very tragic conflict.

If those elements reflect the progress that has been made thus far, the Secretary-General's report indicates a number of challenges ahead. A number of measures need to be undertaken as part of an agenda for action, looking to the future. Over the past two years, a number of parties in conflict have made concrete commitments concerning the protection of children. The challenge now is how to ensure adherence to those commitments. The Security Council and other key actors can make a big difference in this regard by using their collective weight and influence to lean on parties in conflict.

In today's world, no party in conflict is an island unto itself. The international community should make any assistance — political, diplomatic, financial, material or military — to parties to armed conflict contingent on their observing standards for the protection of children.

In the spirit of the Secretary-General's Global Compact initiative, on which a most important meeting is taking place today, the international community should encourage the corporate sector to develop voluntary codes of conduct regarding illicit trade with parties in conflict in situations where children and women are the primary victims of such conflict. In that context, Member States should consider putting in place executive and legislative measures to discourage corporate actors within their jurisdictions from engaging in such illicit trade. The Security Council should continue to investigate the linkages between such illicit trade and the war machines in various parts of the world, and should consider bans on such exports of natural resources, especially gold, timber and diamonds.

In the context of peace processes, it is important that the international community should exclude grave crimes against children from any amnesty provisions and legislation.

Children tend to suffer the worst in situations of sanctions regimes. I therefore hope that the Council will continue to explore, within the present framework, measures to ease the impact of such sanctions on children.

During my visits to countries affected by conflict, I have been deeply distressed by the conditions of internally displaced persons, the vast majority of whom, as we all know, are children and women. Surely, the time has come for the international community to develop a more systematic response and framework for providing access, protection and practical support to such internally displaced persons.

The mainstay of our efforts on the ground comprises local actors and local people. It is for that reason that I address a special appeal to United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organization and the donor community to do a good deal more to provide support, and to strengthen the capacities of national institutions, local governmental organizations and civil-society organizations. That is important not only for creating local capacity, but also for the sustainability of our initiatives and efforts.

I am very struck by the existence, in societies caught in the midst of conflict, of deeply rooted values and norms relative to this agenda. The international community needs to do more to recognize the importance of such values and to work closely with local communities in their efforts to strengthen local values and norms and social networks that have traditionally provided for the protection of children in times of war.

I am very encouraged by the actions which have been taken by major regional groups. I hope the Security Council will encourage the regional organizations to now move to the next step and systematically incorporate the rights and protection of children into their policies, activities and programmes by the allocation of resources where applicable; by the creation, perhaps, of child protection units within their secretariats; by considering the posting of child-protection staff within peace and field operations; and by providing more systematic training on child protection to their peace and field operations staff, and by undertaking initiatives to curb cross-border activities that are deleterious to children in times of war — in particular, the illicit movement of small arms, illicit trading in natural resources and cross-border recruitment and abduction of children.

We cannot move very far in this task — building the movement for the protection of children — without involving young persons themselves in this movement. We must involve them in the protection of children affected by conflict, including in programmes for reconciliation, peace consolidation and peace-building and in developing children-to-children networks.

Beyond the call for the rapid ratification of the Optional Protocol, we must surely turn our energies, in terms of curbing child soldiering, to action on the ground by mobilizing political pressure, by addressing the economic, social and political factors underlying this phenomenon, and by enhancing the woefully thin capacities on the ground to receive and rehabilitate child soldiers.

The international community needs to do a good deal more to fill three gaps within our present mode of response: the special needs of the girl child, the vulnerability of the adolescent and the importance of providing more consistent education to children caught in the midst and the aftermath of conflict.

I have to say that in my work I have been especially impressed by the role being played by non-governmental organizations — their advocacy, their activities on the ground and their role in shaping this agenda. It is quite simply not only crucial but indispensable. It is for this reason that I hope the Security Council will seize the opportunity offered by non-governmental organizations to engage in constructive dialogue and collaboration. All of us will benefit from this. Above all, children will benefit from such collaboration.

I cannot complete my remarks without paying a very special and heartfelt tribute to Madam Graça Machel. She is the one who laid the foundation for what we are discussing and the activities we are undertaking today. To the operational actors on the ground, beginning with the United Nations agencies — UNICEF, first and foremost, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme and other actors within the United Nations system — as well as, of course, the non-governmental organizations. Their activities on the front line are what truly make a difference to the fate of children affected by conflict.

May I say, finally, that we have said enough; we have elaborated enough norms. The time has come for the international community to move beyond the elaboration of norms to the era of application; beyond declaration to taking very specific, targeted measures on the ground, including targeted sanctions against actors, especially parties in conflict who flout international standards regarding the protection of children.

The President: I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his kind words.

I now call on the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, Ms. Carol Bellamy.

Ms. Bellamy: I too am very pleased to join you today as the Council again takes up the issue of children and armed conflict. The Council's ongoing concern is deeply heartening to all of us at the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and indeed, I am sure, to all those who are closely involved in this issue — including my colleague, the Special Representative, Olara Otunnu, who at this point, I would say, deserves the highest praise for his very important work.

I am also pleased, Madam President, that this debate is occurring during your stewardship of the Council. Your exemplary commitment to child rights is well known, not least through your work as chair of the Bureau for the preparatory process for the special session of the General Assembly on children to be held next year. I want to take this opportunity to thank you for everything you have done to make today's debate possible.

The Deputy Secretary-General and the Special Representative have already presented the report of the Secretary-General. I will just say that UNICEF absolutely, fully, endorses the recommendations in it.

Resolution 1261 (1999) is an important step forward. As the report notes, real progress has been made. I will not go into all the details. Mr. Otunnu listed a number, and I will touch on a few that I think are particularly important.

The adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in conflict is of course a milestone. We urge its speedy ratification and entry into force, a process that we hope will be quickened during the forthcoming Millennium Summit.

We have also seen important meetings of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) at which groundbreaking commitments were made to ensure the protection of children in conflict. We also have great hopes for the outcome of September's international conference on war-affected children in Winnipeg, Canada, where we are working closely with the Canadian Government on final preparations.

On the ground, UNICEF is at work in over 25 war-affected countries, collaborating closely with partners like Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Food Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights — as well as with numerous and very important non-governmental organizations — to restart schools, provide educational materials, reunite children and families, supply drugs and vaccines, support the traumatized, operate clinics and hospitals, dig wells, campaign against recruitment and promote demobilization and disarmament.

UNICEF strives, with Olara Otunnu, to promote the values, principles and concrete commitments of resolution 1261 (1999), which reflect the obligations and principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other human rights instruments. This involves advocating the cause of child rights on a daily basis with government officials, insurgents, commanders, civil society representatives, religious leaders, teachers, health workers, women's leaders and with children and young people themselves.

But as our staff in the field regularly note, many of the aspirations set out in the resolution remain unfulfilled. We receive daily reports from the field of sickness and malnutrition, of exploitation and rapes, of killings and indiscriminate bombings, of recruitment and abductions.

There are those who argue that words make little difference, that the children of Somalia, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Colombia and so many other countries of course need much more than words and declarations of intent. But we think that words do matter, especially when they represent the commitment of a political body with responsibilities as heavy as those of this Council, charged as it is with the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security.

The staff of UNICEF and other operational agencies, who work day in and day out to assist and protect some of the most vulnerable, exploited and abused children in the world, all need the commitment and support of this Council. They need to know that Member States are actively working to uphold the standards and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Geneva Conventions.

What we ask today on behalf of the war-affected children whom we attempting to serve around the world is that Council Members do everything in their power to ensure that the words that are contained in the Secretary-General's report, and the words of the Council's resolutions, become more than words, that they become deeds, and that these deeds make a difference to the lives of children.

All those who violate children's rights or collude in such violations — whether Governments or rebel groups, manufacturers of or dealers in weapons of war, or, simply, unscrupulous business people — must be made to feel the power of the Council's words. They must feel the opprobrium and repugnance of civilized

people everywhere. They must be shamed, disgraced and held accountable for their actions.

The corridors of the United Nations are littered with unfulfilled promises — promises that were made in good faith to ease suffering, end exploitation and protect children from the loss of childhood and from rape, mutilation and recruitment as child soldiers. Yet time and time again, in such places as Rwanda, Sierra Leone, the Sudan, Afghanistan, Kosovo and East Timor, cruelty and indifference have prevailed. It is not too late to make good on those promises.

Although it would be almost invidious to single out particular recommendations from the report — all of which, as I indicated earlier, we endorse — there a number of critical issues that we hope will be emphasized in the outcome of this meeting.

One such issue is the need for education programmes to be restarted as soon as possible, even while conflict still rages. We know from experience in such countries as Somalia and Azerbaijan that education not only establishes hope for the future but provides at least a semblance of a normal environment for traumatized children, while lessening the chances of recruitment.

Moreover, hospitals, clinics, schools and other sites where children are most likely to be found, must be protected from attacks and violence as set out in international humanitarian law. We know from Angola and Mozambique that children must have their own demobilization programmes, separate from those of adults and tailored to their special needs. We know from the Sudan and Sri Lanka that, on the ground, all parties to the conflict — insurgents as well as Governments — must be actively engaged in upholding the international standards that protect children.

We know from the Balkans and Sierra Leone that the particular vulnerability of girls, especially their vulnerability to sexual abuse and to other forms of violence and abuse, must be addressed. We know from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo that lack of security for humanitarian personnel reduces access to children who are in need, and the consequences are drastic for their health and well-being.

We know from Bosnia and Cambodia that landmine-awareness programmes can significantly reduce death and injury from mines and unexploded ordnance.

We know from these and all of our other field programmes that the implementation of the recommendations set out in the Secretary-General's report requires resources that will allow those of us who are present in the field to be with children in need and to work with them, their families and their communities, and to implement real programmes.

We urge Council members to use their influence to ensure that all of us receive the funding required, and that it is sustained and consistent, so that we can plan not just for the short term, but to ensure that children are supported in their longer-term needs for rehabilitation, reintegration and return to childhood and normality.

UNICEF has every hope that the Council's response to the report will be strong and unambiguous, with determined and intensive follow-up. That means that in authorizing any peacekeeping missions, imposing any form of sanctions, facilitating a ceasefire or finding ways to prevent conflict the Council will ensure that children's rights are addressed in a practical and effective way. Where warring parties or others violate the provisions of any resolution, whether resolution 1261 (1999) or one that results from this meeting, we urge Council members to speak out, collectively and individually, to make it clear that violators are overstepping the bounds of decent and acceptable behaviour.

Active steps must be taken to monitor the behaviour of States and of other parties. The Council should demand that all violations, broken promises and unfulfilled commitments be brought to its attention.

I cannot overstate the gravity and the urgency of this issue. We cannot ask war-affected children to wait any longer for their rights to be respected. Developing minds and bodies require attention now. As the Council knows, childhood is finite, and once it is lost it cannot be replaced. As the Secretary-General himself says in his report, we "must do much more to move from words to deeds, from the drafting of norms to an era of application". My colleague, Mr. Otunnu, echoed those words earlier. I urge the Council to heed the Secretary-General's exhortation.

Once again, I thank you very much, Madam President, for giving me this opportunity to participate.

The President: I thank the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund for the kind words she addressed to me.

Mr. Cunningham (United States of America): Thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting on such an important subject for the Security Council. I would also like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General and the Executive Director of United Nations Children's Fund, Ms. Bellamy, for their continuing efforts to strengthen the role of the United Nations in bringing these issues to the attention of the international community and in dealing with the plight of children in conflict. Of course, we greatly appreciate the important work of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu. His remarks show that we are making some progress. He has eloquently described the devastating impact of conflict on millions of children and, unfortunately, his remarks, and those of Director Bellamy, show that much more needs to be done.

In recent months we have looked at the humanitarian aspects of questions facing the Council, at the protection of civilians in armed conflict and at the issue of internally displaced persons. All of these topics are interlinked, and we cannot look at them in isolation from each other.

We echo the sentiments expressed by Special Representative Otunnu in his most recent report: when children are used as pawns in warfare, whether they are targets or perpetrators, a shadow is cast on their future and on the future of their society. As Mr. Otunnu has pointed out again and again, many regions of the world are experiencing the breakdown of traditional norms and social codes of behaviour, the casting aside of local injunctions and taboos and the undermining of the authority of local elders and community structures. This disintegration of local value systems yields an ethical vacuum in which civilians and combatants are viewed without distinction as enemy targets. Children, women and the elderly — that is, the most vulnerable — have, all too often, tragically become fair game for the most horrendous of atrocities in the valueless climate which prevails in too many war zones.

As civilian populations are often deliberately targeted, children suffer disproportionately as their families are killed or displaced. One of the most heinous developments has been the increasing use of young children in armed conflict in blatant violation of international law.

Two important international initiatives to protect children from illegal use in armed conflict are the Convention on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, which President Clinton signed in 1999, and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which President Clinton signed, here at the United Nations, on 5 July, and submitted to the Senate for ratification just yesterday.

The Optional Protocol sets a clear standard: no one under 18 may ever be drafted by any army in any country. Signatories will do everything feasible to keep even volunteers from taking a direct part in hostilities before they are 18; they will make it a crime for any non-governmental force to use children under 18 in war; and they will work together to meet the needs of children who have been forced into war to save a generation that already has lost too much.

We believe that it is time to step up pressure to implement the many existing norms to prevent further abuse and brutalization of children. We should not let our attention be distracted by debates on the margins of the problem, but should focus on where the real abuses are. Children even younger than 15 whose lives are totally distorted by their recruitment or impressment into armed conflict and brutality are becoming both perpetrators and victims.

The United States places the highest priority on assisting young children throughout the world who are forced against their will — often kidnapped at gunpoint — to take up arms in support of militias and paramilitary groups. The United States works closely with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) with respect to programmes to rehabilitate children through counselling, reconciliation, education and vocational training, in the hope that they will readjust and be reintegrated into civilian society.

Since the 1980s the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has provided over $30 million in support of activities — including demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration — that respond to the needs of children, including child soldiers affected by armed conflict in such areas as Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka.

We are particularly concerned about the plight of uprooted children. Over half of the internally displaced persons today are children, and the proportion of refugee children is equally high. In recent years the United States has contributed substantially to activities for refugee children, including support for the children-at-risk programmes of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which focus on children affected by armed conflict, including child soldiers, and for the Liberian Children's Initiative, a joint UNHCR/UNICEF programme to address the needs of children and youth in Liberia following seven years of war.

Thousands of children have received assistance, either directly or indirectly, from programmes funded by the United States in Angola, Liberia, northern Uganda and Sierra Leone. Last year we contributed $5 million to UNHCR in support of its children-at-risk programme and refugee-children-related activities. In Sierra Leone USAID has made equally substantial contributions to UNICEF for assistance to war-affected children, including documentation and tracing of unaccompanied children and reunification with their families, demobilization and community reintegration of former child soldiers.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report and are reviewing its specific recommendations closely. We look forward to working with the other Council members on a closer review of the report. We also look forward to hearing from other delegations and key stakeholders so that we may be well guided throughout the course of our decision-making process. Yesterday's Arria-style meeting was a solid step in this direction.

The great German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminded us during one of the darkest moments of the twentieth century that a test of morality of a society is what it does for its children. We must not forget that today's children are tomorrow's hope. We must all work together to ensure that the future for all children is better and brighter.

Mr. Listre (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Since 1999 the Security Council has been addressing the question of the participation of children in armed conflict, because it understands that this painful reality of our times represents a grave threat to the future of new generations that will inevitably have consequences for international peace and security in the world of tomorrow.

Once again, Jamaica, through its Permanent-Representative, now President of the Council, has proposed as the subject of today's open debate a topic that is both a moral imperative and intellectually stimulating. We are extremely grateful.

Likewise, I would like to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his detailed report, issued on 19 July, which will undoubtedly contribute many aspects and arguments to this debate. It brings us face-to-face with the real situation of children in armed conflict and includes recommendations, many addressed to the Security Council.

The presence of the Deputy Secretary-General is particularly meaningful. She has expressed the concern of the Secretary-General and her own concern about this very important issue.

I would also like to express my thanks for the presentations by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Olara Otunnu, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Carol Bellamy.

Security Council resolution 1261 (1999) is a major milestone since in that resolution the Council took the matter in hand, with the aim of taking measures to end the scourge of the use of child soldiers, as well as to alleviate the agonizing plight of children who are victims of armed conflict. Those children are often forcibly taken from their homes, separated from their parents, deprived of the necessities of life, left without education, exploited and sexually abused.

Moreover, in resolutions 1265 (1999) and 1296 (2000), on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, the Council made special provisions for children who are the victims of armed conflict. These normative provisions are clear proof of the Council's concern about, and commitment to, safeguarding the rights of children in conflict situations and once and for all putting an end to their use as soldiers.

However, despite the efforts of the international community, we continue to receive reports that the victimization of children continues, through forced recruitment, economic exploitation and sexual abuse. Girls are in a particularly vulnerable situation, for they must often act as heads of families separated by war and face rape, unwanted pregnancy, abduction and enslavement. This is compounded by the fact that in

addition to their tremendous suffering in the immediate term many of them experience a social stigma that impedes their reintegration into families and societies in the post-conflict phase.

What response can the international community in general, and the Security Council in particular, give to these boys and girls? What solutions do we have to offer them?

First of all, as the Council has noted repeatedly and most recently in its presidential statement of 30 November 1999, we need to build a culture of prevention, which essentially means creating conditions that prevent the emergence of conflicts. Building a culture of prevention is without question the major challenge facing the Organization in the future, as it entails eradicating extreme poverty, creating conditions for the development of all countries and ending social exclusion and intolerance of diversity.

A poor or ignorant boy or girl living in a poor society lacking any development prospects has an exponentially greater likelihood of being recruited as a soldier than boys or girls living under decent conditions for living and growing.

The second type of solution that the international community can offer is education. UNICEF has frequently stressed that children who attend school are much better protected against forced recruitment and have more ways to defend themselves in conflict situations. As the Secretary-General correctly points out in his report, schooling — even emergency schooling in the case of refugees and internally displaced persons — protects children against abuse and gives them a psychological shield against the stress of war. It also provides them with a supportive emotional framework that is essential for children who have been abused or separated from their parents.

Regrettably, the very existence of the conflict militates against schooling. The World Education Forum, held in Dakar in April of this year, noted that in the last 10 years the existence of armed conflict has been the main obstacle to achieving the objective of providing basic education to all children — boys and girls.

For this reason, it is important to take into account the recommendation made by the Secretary-General in his report concerning the need for United Nations agencies and other humanitarian and non-governmental organizations working in the area of helping children in conflict situations to provide for basic educational services.

Formal schooling must be supplemented with specific educational campaigns targeting specific problems, such as awareness-raising campaigns to prevent landmine accidents and educational campaigns to prevent sexual abuse.

Lastly, the third approach to a solution is justice. In this regard, the Rome Statute creating the International Criminal Court is a milestone, as it defines as war crimes rape or sexual attacks against children; the conscription of children under 15; and intentional attacks on civilian populations, humanitarian vehicles or personnel, hospitals or schools.

Furthermore, the Statute defines the forcible transfer of the children of a threatened national, ethnic, racial or religious group to its assailants as genocide, and sexual slavery as a crime against humanity. For this reason, we express the hope that all States will sign and ratify the Rome Statute and that it will soon enter into force.

It is also encouraging to see that the General Assembly adopted on 25 May last the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Argentina signed that Optional Protocol on 8 June and urges all States to sign and ratify it as early as possible.

Children — boys and girls — are the most vulnerable segment of the civilian population, not simply because of their inherent weakness but also because any harm caused them will have inevitable consequences for their development and their future social roles.

The Security Council, within its purview, should continue to address the situation of boys and girls caught up in armed conflict and to foster awareness among the leaders of the international community in this regard.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): Thank you, Madam President, for your leadership in convening this meeting on a very important topic. I am very grateful to the Deputy Secretary-General, to the Special Representative and to the Executive Director for their important briefings this morning and also for their unremitting work on behalf of children.

The representative of France will later be making a detailed statement on behalf of the European Union, which I fully endorse. In the interests of time, but also to underline that the suffering of children in conflict is a key concern to the United Kingdom, I will just make a few key points.

The Council has to get to grips with the protection of children in practice. The Secretary-General's report gives us a good basis for moving forward. The international community has a moral responsibility to prevent the suffering of children, whether as the innocent victims of fighting or through deliberate targeting.

Conflict prevention is the vitally important wider context. We had a welcome opportunity to discuss this last week, and I hope that we will be taking steps to translate that debate into concrete action. Similarly, it is important to establish systems which protect children before conflicts break out. Practical measures can make a real difference. As the Secretary-General points out, children are particularly vulnerable to recruitment as soldiers if they have had little or no access to education. The United Nations system needs to ensure that access. Adequate national birth registration systems would also help to prevent underage soldiers from being recruited. The media can play an important role in their reporting before and during conflicts.

If these practical measures are to work, there is a vital need for improved coordination among the agencies of the United Nations system. The Secretary-General's call in his report for greater cooperation with non-governmental organizations and civil society is welcome. Such non-governmental organizations as Save the Children have unparalleled experience on which the international community should draw.

Our Arria-format meeting yesterday with a group of concerned non-governmental organizations was an excellent example of this. Non-governmental organizations have a vital role to play in bringing to the attention of the Council information that can serve as an early warning of impending crisis. We also have our own responsibility to act on that information when the situation merits. We need collectively to work on improving information flow throughout the United Nations system and beyond if we are to have durable success in this area. I also entirely endorse the emphasis which Special Representative Otunnu has placed on local actors in specific situations.

There are plenty of very detailed recommendations in the Secretary-General's report, which we will need to consider closely. My delegation is keen to hear the views of non-members of the Council today before we get into that debate. In considering the report, it will be important for the Council to build on, rather than duplicate, the work that we have already done. We should be wary of straying into sensitive areas that are being comprehensively dealt with elsewhere, such as in the working group on sanctions.

But the Council has a vital role to play above all in insisting that all States Members of the United Nations implement existing international humanitarian law and conventions in respect of children and armed conflict.

There is a good deal of hard work ahead of us if we are to fulfil our responsibilities in this key area. I would like to assure Special Representative Otunnu and Ms. Bellamy that they can rely on the strong support of the United Kingdom delegation in pushing this important agenda forward and in turning words into action.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Norway, Sierra Leone and Uganda in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Mukongo Ngay (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Mr. Kolby (Norway), Mr. Kamara (Sierra Leone) and Mr. Semakula Kiwanuka (Uganda) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

Mr. Fowler (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Let me first congratulate you, Madam President, for having taken the initiative to hold a thematic debate on this important and tragic subject.

I wish to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General for having produced a broad-ranging report on war-affected children which faithfully reflects the multifaceted character of this problem and hence dictates the multifaceted nature of what must be our response.

During the open debate on war-affected children last year, where we adopted the landmark resolution 1261 (1999), I underlined that children are at the heart of our global community and at the core of human security.

Sadly, as we have seen in the Secretary-General's report and in reporting from a number of civil society organizations, the tragedy of war-affected children continues to challenge the international community. Children continue to suffer the effects of various forms of armed conflict in areas as diverse as Sierra Leone, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Colombia and Sri Lanka. In his report the Secretary-General correctly emphasizes the need to be both sensitive and creative in devising solutions for each situation on the ground. I must, however, emphasize the importance of recognizing that children are more than simply victims; they are also actors in armed conflict and in its aftermath.

(*spoke in English*)

All that said, we can point to progress in several areas. First, resolution 1261 (1999) on children in armed conflict, buttressed by resolutions 1265 (1999) and 1296 (2000) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, have propelled us to work more diligently to incorporate the rights and well-being of war-affected children into all the work of the United Nations. The Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, whose presence I warmly welcome, has worked with Governments and non-State actors to include the rights and protection of children on the agendas of ongoing peace negotiations. The Security Council has specifically incorporated the needs of children into the mandates of peace support operations in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. My delegation welcomes plans to deploy systematically senior child protection advisers with peacekeeping missions. The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) already have the benefit of such expertise. We are also encouraged by efforts to deepen training on children's rights for United Nations staff involved in peace support missions and the provision of humanitarian assistance, and in supporting peace efforts more generally.

Other than in the "mainstreaming" of children's perspectives, a second area of progress is in international standards. The Secretary-General rightly points to the important achievement of the agreement on the text of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. By addressing issues of recruitment and deployment, and thus keeping children out of conflict, it has great value as a preventive tool. Canada was pleased to be the first State to both sign and ratify the Optional Protocol, a testament to our strong commitment to the standards it sets out.

I would also like to signal the increasingly strong support for addressing the needs of war-affected children in other international organizations and groupings. I would especially in this regard highlight the work of members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Last April Canada and Ghana co-hosted in Accra a landmark Conference on War-affected Children in West Africa. During two days of discussion we considered a comprehensive agenda, and West African participants adopted a Declaration and Plan of Action covering the full range of issues, including the creation of a child protection unit within ECOWAS; military education and training for all ECOWAS members; a proposal for a West African week of truce for war-affected children; and the issue of abducted children and a call for their release. We were inspired by the commitment and energy that participants brought to the meeting and to the follow-up. The actions to which participants committed themselves coincide with many of the actions proposed in the Secretary General's report.

Other organizations are also doing their part. The Organization of American States (OAS) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) recently adopted decisions that will require concerted follow-up. Likewise, we are extremely pleased that Foreign Ministers and leaders of the Group of Eight (G8) have recognized the issue of war-affected children as critical to the conflict prevention agenda. G8 Foreign Ministers, in their Miyazaki initiatives for conflict prevention, pointed to war-affected children as one of the most disturbing human security issues facing the world today.

The continuing work of civil society on this issue deserves special tribute. Yesterday, we had a very useful exchange of ideas with many of the leading non-governmental organizations working with children, in a meeting chaired by Ambassador Andjaba of Namibia. We must continue to collaborate with such organizations, which, at the field level, are on the front line in trying to meet the protection and assistance needs of affected children and their communities. One of the most pressing and troubling issues raised yesterday afternoon was that of children, some as young as seven years old, abducted by non-State actors to serve as soldiers, sexual slaves and spies. This is an issue on which we would encourage further efforts to stop such abductions and to see abductees returned to their families. We will continue to urge urgent collaboration between the Council and other bodies of the Organization, civil society and Governments to this end.

Governments must also work directly with young people, especially war-affected children, on these issues. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Otunnu, has offered us some excellent examples of what can be achieved through his own stalwart efforts.

Many of the recommendations of the Secretary-General build on and refine elements in resolution 1261 (1999), and we are prepared to move ahead with them. For example, I would highlight the need to ensure that attention in the United Nations system continues to be paid to girls' experiences of armed conflict, highlighting the need for sex-disaggregated data. I also note the ongoing importance of gender awareness training for peace support personnel and of ensuring that rehabilitation activities focus on assistance programmes which help not only war-affected children, but also their families and their communities, as they recover from armed conflict.

Other recommendations, however, will require more extended discussion, since they challenge us to look at new approaches on such issues as conditionality for development assistance, corporate behaviour, interaction with non-State actors and practical ways to effectively engage young people in peace processes and agreements.

Finally, Canada firmly believes that the time is ripe for consolidating global efforts to protect and support children who have been trapped in the midst of conflict, and remains committed to working energetically and creatively on this set of issues. But, because of their complexity and sensitivity to local conditions, it is essential that we collaborate closely to share experience and best practices and to strengthen our resolve. For that reason, we are encouraging Foreign Ministers and other Ministers, particularly those attending the ministerial general debate in the Millennium Assembly, to join together in Winnipeg on 16 and 17 September with non-governmental organizations, the business community, the United Nations and young people to build a lasting and sustainable partnership with all those who have a part in safeguarding the rights, welfare and protection of war-affected children.

The objective of the Winnipeg International Conference on War-Affected Children, which will take place from 10 to 17 September, with Ministers attending only the last two days, is to take stock, since Mrs. Graça Machel submitted her ground-breaking study on the impact of armed conflict on children, in 1996, and together map out a consolidated agenda for war-affected children which can be taken to the special session on children in 2001. The September conference will examine the many ways in which children are affected: refugee children, children who are internally displaced, children who have been sexually exploited and otherwise traumatized by armed conflict, child soldiers and the gender dimensions of conflict.

The conference will be co-hosted by our Foreign Minister, Lloyd Axworthy, and our Minister for International Cooperation, Miss Maria Minna. As Carol Bellamy has indicated, it enjoys the vital and enthusiastic support of both the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Mr. Otunnu. Mrs. Machel has graciously agreed to be the honorary conference Chair. We very much hope that the Governments of all those countries represented at this table and in this Chamber will come and exercise leadership in the growing movement to protect the children of today and tomorrow from the brutality of war and ensure that the next century is one in which the rights of children are methodically and specifically upheld.

I thank you, Madam President, most particularly for your deep and abiding personal commitment to the welfare of children, which is evident in so much of your energetic involvement in children's rights issues across the spectrum of United Nations activities.

The President: I thank the representative of Canada for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Olara Otunnu, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Carol Bellamy, for their tireless efforts to ease the situation of children in armed conflict and for the proposals and recommendations they made in their statements.

Nearly a year has gone by since the previous meeting of the Security Council devoted to the problem of children in armed conflict. Our return to this pressing topic shows that children who fall victim to war remain the Security Council's focus of attention, above all in the context of its implementation of its fundamental obligation under the Charter to maintain international peace and security.

In recent years, the rights of children have become a high-priority objective within the framework of the activities of the entire United Nations system. This September will mark 10 years since the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a document that became the first universal bill of rights for children. At the heart of the Convention lies the conviction that children have special rights and may therefore expect to receive particular attention from the adult world. Naturally, the fundamental right remains that to life.

Moreover, the Convention specifically provides for protection of the rights of the child in armed conflict. In this respect, it also applies to those children who have been forcibly involved in hostilities; who are growing up in refugee camps; who are left to fend for themselves on city streets; and who are subject to exploitation.

The change in the nature of contemporary conflicts has led to a situation in which more than 90 per cent of victims are civilians, at least half of whom are children. Children account for more than 65 per cent of refugees and internally displaced persons. According to the assessments of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Otunnu, there are currently 20 million children who have been displaced by war within their countries and to others. Many have been maimed and orphaned; thousands have been subject to rape, sexual abuse and other atrocities. Approximately 300,000 young people under 18 have been forced to take up arms as child soldiers. Behind these figures lies enormous human misery placed on the tender shoulders of children.

It is obvious that the international community cannot fail to act in response to such serious situations in which children are suffering. Of course, the best way to protect children is to prevent the emergence of conflicts or to settle them before they become devastating.

Russia generally supports the draft Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, drawn up by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 10 May this year. This is an important victory for the protection of the interests of children and a significant step towards the implementation of our shared goals. The Russian Federation supports the adoption of the Protocol at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly this fall, so that it can be open for speedy signing and ratification, with the subsequent appropriate modification of national legislations.

At the same time, we regret that the relevant working group of the Commission on Human Rights was not able entirely to fulfil its mandate to create a new, effective mechanism for the protection of the rights of children in armed conflict. We believe that if the positions of a number of States on this question had been more flexible and more responsible, we would have been able to include in the Protocol a universal age limit of 18 for recruitment in armed forces and participation in hostilities, thus avoiding the use of a double standard. That is the principled position of the Russian Federation.

Our country was among the first to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The legal and practical guarantee of the rights of children is a fundamental axiom of Russian policy in the sphere of the protection of children, which is being carried out in the framework of a single national plan of action for children. Moreover, highest priority attention is being accorded to the problems of children in difficult situations and to questions of their physical and psychological rehabilitation.

Among the legal acts governing activities on the behalf of children in our country, it is important to note the 1998 federal law on fundamental guarantees of the

rights of the child in the Russian Federation, which legally enshrined the objectives and major axes of work to promote and protect the rights of the child.

Despite the difficult economic situation in Russia, the Russian Government is seeking ways of providing social support to the most vulnerable strata of the population, first and foremost children, caught up in armed conflict.

In conclusion, I should like to express the hope that the recommendations put forward in the report of the Secretary-General on the question of children in armed conflict, as well as today's wide-ranging discussion in the Security Council, will provide additional impetus to international cooperation to protect our growing generation from the conflagration of armed conflict.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): I should like to express my appreciation to you, Madam President, for convening this open meeting of the Council on this important subject. I should also like to thank the Secretary-General for his detailed and comprehensive report on the implementation of resolution 1261 (1999) on children in armed conflict. I am grateful to the Deputy Secretary-General for her introductory remarks. Let me also take this opportunity to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Carol Bellamy, for the very important contributions they just made. I commend them for their strong, unshakeable commitment in the cause of the protection of children.

It is indeed encouraging to note that considerable progress has been made since we last debated this issue in August last year. However, more needs to be done and it is imperative for the Council to continue to keep the issue of children in armed conflict on its agenda. It has clearly acknowledged, in several of its resolutions and presidential statements, that the harmful impact of conflict on children has grave implications, not only in the context of peace and security, but also for socio-economic development.

Nearly all of today's conflicts occur within national boundaries, and 90 per cent of the victims are civilians, mainly children and women. We cannot deny the fact that, in many conflict situations, the most vulnerable members of the population, particularly children and women, are often targeted with impunity; and because children have been conscripted to bear arms, they end up killing other children as well. This is, indeed, a sad state of affairs. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has not only exacerbated conflicts around the world, but has also led to the increased use of children as combatants and pawns in the deadly game of warfare played and orchestrated by adults. Many of these child soldiers either fall as early casualties of the conflict or survive to become cool and callous instruments of warfare.

In "The State of the World's Children 2000", UNICEF reports that in the decade since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child more than 2 million children have been killed, and more than 6 million injured or disabled, in armed conflicts. Hundreds of thousands of children have been forced to take part in armed conflict as soldiers, sex slaves or porters, clearly in violation of their human rights. Countless children, including girls of very tender age, have been scarred psychologically by the violence and the trauma they have endured. Many have died for lack of food and necessary medical or health services, and a great number have been orphaned as a result of armed conflict. The statistics on children in armed conflict are mind-boggling. They should spur us to take prompt action.

The protection of children in armed conflict should be all-encompassing. Children should not only be assured of physical security in situations of armed conflicts, but should also be provided with legal protection under international law. That point has been underscored by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2000/712) and by previous speakers today. The report of the Secretary-General has drawn our attention to the fact that there exist a number of international instruments and conventions that provide a legal basis for the protection of children, but that these have not stopped children from being attacked, targeted and abused with impunity. The perpetrators of these crimes must be held accountable for them; they must be told in unambiguous terms that they cannot hope to escape the full penalty of the law, even after the conflict is over. There should be no leniency or amnesty with respect to crimes perpetrated against innocent children. As a signatory of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Malaysia calls on the few remaining countries to sign or ratify the Convention so as to make it a truly universal legal instrument. Malaysia continues strongly

to support the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

As a practical measure to ensure the protection of children in armed conflict, it is important that United Nations personnel, both military and civilian, involved in peacekeeping missions be appropriately sensitized and trained on the subject, so as to be better able to handle actual situations on the ground. Indeed, the physical protection of children in armed conflict has become even more urgent than before, given the fact that there are today millions of refugees and internally displaced persons around the world, vast numbers of whom are children, and many of them orphans.

Equally important in this exercise is the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers. It is shocking that as many as 300,000 children under the age of 18 are currently participating in armed conflicts around the world. What is even more alarming is that this trend of involving children in armed conflict is on the increase. Hence the importance of ensuring that their protection and well-being are recognized as a priority concern in the mandates of peacekeeping operations, including programmes of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. We therefore welcome the collaboration among the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the United Nations Children's Fund and other United Nations agencies in producing terms of reference for Child Protection Advisers. We recognize that two peacekeeping operations currently have senior Child Protection Advisers on the ground; two were seconded from UNICEF and the third was previously with a United Nations peacekeeping operation. We also take positive note of the fact that there are two such advisers working with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Kinshasa, and that others are being recruited for imminent deployment.

My delegation is equally concerned about the debilitating effects of sanctions on children; it may be years before the problems are recognized. We fully agree with the Secretary-General's admonition that there should be a coordinated and integrated approach when sanctions are imposed to minimize unintended consequences on civilian populations, especially children. We have consistently called for and we therefore strongly support the dispatching of assessment missions to targeted States, not only before the implementation of a sanctions regime but also after sanctions have been imposed.

My delegation agrees with the Secretary-General that the best way to address the problem of children in armed conflict is to prevent armed conflict in the first place, which entails the promotion of a culture of peace and prevention. Just last week, the Council addressed that very important issue. In its presidential statement (S/PRST/2000/25), the Council recognized that peace not only was the absence of conflict, but also required a positive, dynamic, participatory process in which dialogue was encouraged and conflicts were solved in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation. The Council also reaffirmed the belief that early warning, preventive diplomacy, preventive deployment and post-conflict peace-building were interdependent and complementary components of a comprehensive conflict-prevention strategy, and emphasized its continuing commitment to addressing the prevention of armed conflicts in all regions of the world.

We should move beyond pronouncements to action. The Secretary-General's report, which is rich in details as well as in recommendations, has laid out the problem of children and armed conflict in all its dimensions, and has challenged us to take concrete action. It outlines some 55 recommendations, some of which clearly fall within the purview of the Security Council. We should rise to meet the challenge, mindful of the fact that children are society's most precious asset; we should do everything in our power as adults to protect and nurture them, as a sacred, God-given responsibility. In that undertaking, we should mobilize the necessary resources and cooperate and collaborate with all relevant international and domestic actors, including international institutions, the private sector and civil society, all of which have played commendable roles.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): We would like at the outset to convey our appreciation to Ms. Louise Fréchette, Deputy Secretary-General, for her statement earlier this morning. We found Ambassador Olara Otunnu's rich and substantive introduction of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2000/712) to be very valuable. The statement by Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), outlined what is being done on this matter at the field level, and also what needs to be done.

Children are the most helpless victims of conflicts. Not only are they disproportionately affected by war and violence, they are often compelled to perpetrate atrocities against others. Denied the protection of traditional institutions such as the family, and faced with societal breakdown and the erosion of values and the rule of law, children suffer lasting adverse developmental consequences; this affects peace and stability for generations to come. It is encouraging to see that awareness about the damaging impact of armed conflict on children has significantly increased in the past four years, since the publication of the Graça Machel report on that subject (A/51/306). The Council's resolution 1261 (1999) has added strength to the actions needed in this area.

Sadly, action to address the problem has yet to match the increased awareness. It is in that context that we very much welcome the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, presented both to the General Assembly and to the Security Council. To our satisfaction, we find that the report focuses on action-oriented recommendations that we believe go to what can be called the "heart of darkness" of this issue. We have gone through the recommendations very carefully and have noted the areas on which the Council should pronounce itself and adopt specific actions. Let me highlight some of those areas.

Last May, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the involvement of children in armed conflict, was adopted by the General Assembly. That was most certainly a welcome development and added to existing international instruments that address this issue. However, as the Secretary-General mentioned in his report, if the impressive array of humanitarian and human rights standards intended to protect children from armed conflict were universally and seriously respected, the protection of children would be largely assured.

How then to ensure that the international standards are respected? One obstacle that persists is the matter of how to ensure compliance by non-State armed groups. As these days the nature of conflicts tends to be intra-State, this question is becoming more and more important. These groups violate human rights standards, disregard international norms and perpetrate violence, including mutilations, rape and abductions, and international instruments seldom cover them adequately. True, there is a move to hold the leaders of such armed groups accountable, but we must be careful that in holding leaders accountable we do not grant impunity to the rank and file. Our responsibility cannot stop with the leaders alone. There must be justice for the victim and punishment for all perpetrators. The Security Council must make it absolutely clear that individuals committing atrocities will be brought to book.

The second point that I would like to make in this regard concerns the recommendations in the report with regard to corporate sector activities and initiatives. Useful approaches have been suggested that merit further consideration, including legislative measures and voluntary codes of conduct for businesses. We see the Council's leading role in this regard as seeing to it that, on the one hand, legitimate business interests are not affected and, on the other, that blanket commercial bans are not applied to countries, while keeping the focus squarely on the plight of children all the time.

In all that we do we must ensure that mechanisms are in place to monitor and assess the impact of initiatives we take for children. This is very important for learning lessons from shortcomings, mistakes and failures. The Council should encourage the United Nations agencies on the ground and civil society actors to put in place such mechanisms. One area where we have learned of children's suffering is under sanctions regimes. These unintended effects of sanctions must be mitigated. The Council has a duty to design sanctions regimes that do not affect the innocent.

Important work is being done by regional and subregional organizations in Africa, Central America and the Asia-Pacific region for promoting the cause of children affected by armed conflicts. Quite often, affected regions are in an advantageous position to develop practical approaches and norms that can contribute to global efforts. The Security Council should encourage such initiatives. In this context we welcome the idea of declaring child-soldier-free zones in all parts of the world.

Non-governmental organizations and other civil society actors, including traditional institutions such as the family and indigenous conflict-prevention institutions, can play a leading role in stopping and preventing suffering of children. Children themselves should be allowed to play a greater role in peacemaking and conflict-prevention and should be

provided with education to better develop their potential. The Arria formula meeting that the Council held yesterday under the chairmanship of Ambassador Andjaba was remarkable in terms of contents and sharing of ideas. We hope such consultations with our non-governmental organization partners will be held more often.

This brings me to the greater question of regeneration of traditional values and norms that are eroded in a conflict situation. Local institutions and organizations would have a leading role in this regard. Governments would have to nurture the sustainability of their efforts through legal and administrative frameworks conducive to facilitating their work. International actors have a great responsibility for providing resources and developing the capacity of these institutions.

The Security Council has already called for a culture of prevention. This culture of prevention stems from traditional values, norms and institutions and is nurtured by a culture of peace. I cannot overemphasize the importance of a culture of peace for the children. If children were inculcated with a culture of peace through education, advocacy and practice, they would not perpetuate the cycle of violence that turns today's children into tomorrow's perpetrators. Activities by the United Nations and other organizations in post-conflict situations have to address the need to promote a culture of peace through coordinated efforts, and the Security Council should stress the importance of such a culture.

In conclusion, let me mention a great contribution made by Ambassador Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, as advocate, activist and leader in addressing the plight of children in conflict situations. I would be remiss if I did not mention the substantive work of UNICEF in advancing the cause of children all over the world, as well as that of other United Nations agencies in the field and civil society actors.

Our special thanks go to you, Madam President, for putting much-needed stress on the issue of children and armed conflict during the presidency of Jamaica. We consider that today's meeting will put forth ideas that will be crystalized in concrete actions in a focused and action-oriented Security Council resolution.

To be true to all the important statements we make today in the Council, let us embark on an era of application, as called for by the Secretary-General.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): Madam President, I would like to express our appreciation to you and to your delegation for convening this important meeting.

Allow me to join the delegations that spoke before me in thanking the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Louise Fréchette, for her introductory remarks on this extremely important subject. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, for introducing the report of the Secretary-General. We commend Mr. Otunnu for tirelessly continuing advocacy for the most vulnerable members of society. Our gratitude also goes to the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Carol Bellamy, for the very informative briefing she has provided. UNICEF continues to play an indispensable role in the lives of the world's children, particularly those affected by armed conflict.

Almost a year has passed since the historic adoption of resolution 1261 (1999), which contains a number of provisions pertaining to the role that all of us here today, and the international community at large, need to play in order to make the world a better place for all war-affected children.

While my delegation is extremely encouraged by the very useful recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General, I will not address those specific recommendations. Instead, I will make a few general comments; I look forward to examining the recommendations in detail when the Council considers action on the report. It is important to note here that when the Council finally takes action on the recommendations the views of the other members of the United Nations should be taken into consideration.

Resolution 1261 (1999) was a significant milestone. But the international community must go beyond rhetoric and lip service and take concrete and practical measures to prevent the victimization, torture, abuse, maiming and killing of children. An aggressive and proactive approach is required forthwith.

My delegation welcomes the steps taken so far to implement resolution 1261 (1999). Eleven months might not sound very long, but the progress already made in the implementation of that resolution by many actors deserves recognition by the Council. We encourage them to continue these efforts. We welcome in particular the initiatives of regional organizations on

behalf of children affected by armed conflict, as enumerated in the report. We commend the role played by non-governmental organizations in this regard. The Arria-format meeting which we had with non-governmental organizations yesterday is an important beginning of dialogue between civil society and the Security Council. This must be continued. It will require joint efforts by all parts of the international community.

The rights and special needs of girls cannot be emphasized enough. The rapid spread of HIV/AIDS compounds our concern, especially with regard to girls. It is in this context that we need to view the relevant recommendations in the Secretary-General's report addressing gender violence.

We warmly welcome the momentous adoption by the General Assembly on 25 May this year of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. We particularly welcome the provisions stipulating 18 as the minimum age for participation in armed conflict, for compulsory recruitment and for recruitment or use in armed conflict by armed groups.

The ongoing efforts to address the plight of children in armed conflict are encouraging. Central to this should be the commitment to address the root causes of conflict, as well as factors that exacerbate it. Unless this is done, enormous resources will be spent addressing the symptoms, while the problem persists. I therefore wish to emphasize the need to concentrate on social and economic development aspects while addressing children and armed conflict. Furthermore, the very fact that children are involved in armed conflict should itself serve as an early warning to the Security Council and the international community as a whole and influence how and when they should tackle these problems.

Let me also mention that children are being not only victimized, but used to make war. Children can certainly, therefore, be involved in making and keeping the peace. It is therefore important that we share and study the experiences of countries where relevant programmes are being successfully undertaken, for possible application elsewhere.

Another issue to which my delegation attaches great importance is post-conflict support, which will help traumatized children to be fully reintegrated and become useful citizens of society. This requires long-term investment and, hence, the continued support of the international community for Governments emerging from conflict. Specifically, this is an area where United Nations agencies can assist at the local level.

The duty of all parties to conflicts to respect the various international humanitarian and human rights instruments needs to be accentuated here. Those who perpetrate heinous crimes against children should be held accountable for their actions.

Finally, my delegation expresses the hope that other relevant bodies of the United Nations system will take up the recommendations that fall within their respective mandates.

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on children and armed conflict. We are also grateful to the Deputy Secretary-General, Mrs. Fréchette, and to Ambassador Otunnu and Ms. Bellamy for their important statements. Ambassador Otunnu and Ms. Bellamy, in particular, made some important comments which merit our serious consideration. We appreciate the efforts made by the delegation of Jamaica in convening today's meeting.

In recent years the Security Council has played an active role in giving impetus to the resolution of the question of children and armed conflict. Last year the Security Council adopted resolution 1261 (1999) on the question of children and armed conflict, which attracted a great deal of attention to the issue on the part of the international community.

In his report the Secretary-General describes in detail the plight of children in armed conflict from the political, legal and social perspective, as well as from the point of view of disarmament and peacekeeping, and also puts forward 55 specific recommendations which deserve the detailed study and consideration of the United Nations system and the entire membership. We hope that they will not stop merely at considering the report and its recommendations, but will translate the recommendations into action as soon as possible. An effective mechanism should be established to this end.

The protection of children requires a favourable international environment, especially a favourable legal framework. The Chinese delegation welcomes the

adoption by the General Assembly last May of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. We feel that this was an important step by the international community towards protecting children. We are now actively considering signing the Optional Protocol. We hope that the relevant provisions, such as the minimum age limit on joining the military, will be observed by all parties as soon as possible.

A fundamental approach to protecting children in conflict is to effectively prevent, check and eliminate armed conflicts. The Security Council, as the body charged with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, should concentrate its energies on this issue. Only when conflicts are resolved at an early date, and crises dealt with in good time, can the question of the protection of children be truly settled. This is the contribution the Council should make towards resolving the question of children in armed conflict.

Protecting children in armed conflict calls for the common effort of the international community, and especially the collective effort of all agencies within the United Nations system. In this regard we have some good experience, but there is also room for improvement. We hope that the agencies of the United Nations dealing with this question can carry out their own mandates and step up their coordination and cooperation to produce a synergistic effect.

At the same time, the entire international community has a duty to protect children that it cannot shirk. We need the international community's involvement. Meeting under the Arria formula yesterday, the members of the Council carried out a productive dialogue with non-governmental organizations. We appreciate the efforts made by non-governmental organizations in this field. We hope that we can further strengthen the cooperation of the United Nations with these organizations.

The Chinese delegation attaches great importance to the protection of children and has participated actively in the consideration of this question by the relevant bodies of the United Nations. It has also participated actively in international cooperation in this regard. We appreciate the many efforts that have been made over a long time by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Special Representative Olara Otunnu and others to protect children. The Chinese delegation will continue to support their work and is prepared to strengthen it further through bilateral cooperation.

Mr. Hamer (Netherlands): The delegation of France, which currently holds the presidency of the European Union, is inscribed to speak on behalf of the European Union in today's important debate. My delegation will not, therefore, speak in its national capacity on this occasion. We wholeheartedly endorse the important points to be raised in the intervention by the representative of France.

Mr. Krokhmal (Ukraine): Allow me to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to you, Madam President, and to the delegation of Jamaica, for arranging this debate.

Before turning to the subject matter of our discussion and commenting on the interesting and thought-provoking presentations we have just heard from our briefers — the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Carol Bellamy, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Olara Otunnu — I would like to commend in particular the approach you have chosen, Madam President, in dealing with this topic by inviting, in the first place, non-members of the Security Council to express in open debate their views on the latest report of the Secretary-General so that their positions can properly be taken into account by the Council prior to starting its work on a draft resolution on this question.

Only several days ago we applied an innovative approach when preparing the resolution on HIV/AIDS and international peacekeeping. Early consultations with troop-contributing countries allowed us to take into account many of their concerns and to avoid those things that would have drawn criticism if we had not consulted the wider membership of the Organization before adopting that resolution. We are convinced that a similar approach can also work for many other questions on the Council's agenda.

My delegation has already had several opportunities to state its position on the issue of children in armed conflict. I will therefore limit my remarks to those points that are particularly relevant to our deliberations today.

This is not the first time that the issue of children in armed conflict has been considered by the Council. We have gained considerable experience in addressing humanitarian aspects of the maintenance of international peace and security, and we think it is time to take stock of what we have achieved in the domain of the protection of children, and of what remains to be done. The presentation of the new report of the Secretary-General is a good opportunity to do this, and we would like to sincerely thank him for preparing that comprehensive and important study.

It has somehow become a commonplace to say that children, women and other civilians are not simply collateral victims of atrocities committed by various parties in present-day conflict, but, rather, that they have become direct targets of such attacks. This is a sad reality. It is encouraging that these challenges are increasingly the focus of the Council's attention. By addressing these issues, the Security Council not only promotes the protection of children from the impact of war, but also contributes to the goal of conflict resolution, thus advancing the maintenance of peace and security.

Last year the Council adopted resolution 1261 (1999), which became an important tool for advocacy on behalf of children affected by conflict. Some three months ago the Security Council took another step forward by adopting resolution 1296 (2000), which represents a major milestone in the Council's work and reflects a growing consensus among the members of the international community as to the ways and means to ensure the protection of civilians, including children, in armed conflict.

The latest report of the Secretary-General provides an incisive analysis of the ways to enhance the protection of children in armed conflict from different perspectives — including the political, legal, humanitarian, disarmament and peacekeeping perspectives — and also puts forward a number of bold and action-oriented recommendations. We note with satisfaction that they are addressed not only to the Security Council, but also to the General Assembly and individual Member States, which acting within their spheres of responsibility, can effectively contribute to the protection of this most vulnerable group. It should be noted at the same time that a number of those recommendations have already been reviewed by the Council in the context of the working group on the protection of civilians, and that the Council has already acted on them. However, translating general commitments into specific action on the ground still remains the key task in the context of implementing previous decisions, and more efforts should be devoted to that end.

Ukraine fully subscribes to the recommendations of the Secretary-General relating to the legal aspects of enhancing the protection of children, as the provisions of resolution1261 (1999) stress the responsibility of all States to bring an end to impunity and their obligation to prosecute those responsible for grave breaches of international law, in particular violations of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols. Ukraine considers it important that Member States adopt national legislation for the prosecution of individuals responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

We concur with the Secretary-General's view that the issues of the protection and the needs of children in armed conflict should be entrenched in the mandate of every peacekeeping operation. Peacekeeping missions play a critical role in providing protection to children. In order to ensure the implementation of that dimension of the mandate, a senior officer should be responsible for coordinating activities aimed at ensuring the protection and welfare of children. In addition, greater attention should be given to the appropriate training of peacekeeping personnel — both civilian and military — in the area of the protection of the rights of children. It is also important that participants in peacekeeping operations be given specific training that addresses local cultural sensitivities as well as gender-sensitivity issues.

Member States should be further encouraged to provide United Nations peacekeeping missions with a greater number of women personnel, who could play an important role in the protection of children and in tackling gender-sensitivity aspects. When designing its operations, the Security Council must make every effort to protect both children and their supportive environment: schools, hospitals, health centres and religious institutions. Ukraine strongly endorses the concept of children and their protective and nurturing institutions being considered as "zones of peace".

As the provisions of resolution 1261 (1999) require that the situation of children be better addressed in the establishment and implementation of peace agreements and in relief and protection

measures, the international community should exercise its influence and bring concerted pressure to bear on parties to a conflict to place the protection of children on the agenda of the peace process in question. Moreover, in every case the inclusion of the issue of children on the agenda of the peace process should be accompanied by appropriate publicity and special promotion actions.

The demobilization and reintegration of soldiers should be an integral part of the humanitarian relief and peace-building strategy. There is an urgent need for the international community to support programmes, including advocacy and social services, for the demobilization and community reintegration of child soldiers. At the national level, the conscription of children as actors in war should be condemned and the immediate demobilization of children ensured. To that end, we agree with the Secretary-General that Governments should be encouraged to enact legislation to prohibit the recruitment of minors in armed conflicts and together launch a global campaign that would bring an end to such practices and rehabilitate and reintegrate children into society.

The recent adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the minimum age for children in armed conflict represents a significant contribution to the protection of the rights of this most vulnerable group. We hope that the Protocol's adoption will be followed by its rapid ratification by States and its subsequent effective implementation in their national legislation.

As to the economic sanctions imposed by the Security Council, we strongly support the idea that sanctions must be used appropriately to target those responsible in order to avoid causing suffering to the most vulnerable part of population — women and children — both in target and in neighbouring States. In this regard, Ukraine also endorses the idea of establishing a permanent technical review mechanism of United Nations and regional sanctions regimes, which could use information provided by Council members, relevant financial institutions, the Secretariat and other humanitarian actors to monitor the impact of sanctions on civilians, especially children.

Standards and rules aimed at minimizing the humanitarian impact of sanctions must be further developed to ensure that sanctions are not imposed without provision for obligatory, immediate and enforceable humanitarian exemptions. In this connection, we wish to recall the request made by the Security Council in its resolution 1296 (2000) that the Working Group on the general issue of sanctions consider the relevant recommendations of the Secretary-General contained in his report of 8 September 1999. In the context of today's debate, it is important that the Group also be asked to look into the recommendations contained in section F of the report on children in armed conflict and to present its conclusions on them to the Security Council.

In conclusion, I wish to stress that the Secretary-General's report sets out an important agenda and the basis for future work by the Council and by other United Nations bodies. We look forward to further progress in this direction and express our readiness to contribute to the subsequent consideration of the question of children in armed conflict, both in the Security Council and in the General Assembly.

Mr. Jerandi (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): Let me at the outset thank you, Madam President, for giving us this opportunity once again to consider the question of children affected by armed conflict, in particular in the light of the report of the Secretary-General, which is replete with useful information and relevant recommendations.

I wish also to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the commendable work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Olara Otunnu, who has devoted himself tirelessly to promoting the cause of children in situations of armed conflict and that of all actors in this field. I should like also to thank Ms. Bellamy, the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), for her clear and lucid presentation of UNICEF's continued, unremitting and laudable efforts to assist children.

In recent years a tremendous amount has been done to promote the cause of children and to protect them and safeguard their rights during and after conflicts, in particular by strengthening the legal framework in this area and by organizing humanitarian and other activities in the field. However, despite the undeniable progress that has been achieved at both the legal and institutional levels, the situation on the ground is still extremely disquieting. The horrifying record of children victimized and targeted by atrocities perpetrated in times of war and armed conflict is eloquent testimony to that fact.

Given this situation, whose gravity is comprehensively illustrated by the Secretary-General in his report and confirmed by UNICEF and other United Nations agencies, we cannot confine ourselves to a theoretical discussion whose sole purpose would be to express our frustration and indignation.

This discussion should aim to produce results. We must take this opportunity to fulfil our collective responsibility, which, in our opinion, is to devise practical measures, accompanied by implementation, monitoring and follow-up mechanisms. In this regard, we believe that the primary responsibility in this field lies with the United Nations and the Security Council. In this connection, my delegation would like to pay tribute to the Council's commitment, as expressed in its resolutions and in particular resolution 1261 (1999), which recognizes the effects of the situation of children in conflict on international peace and security. That commitment is reflected today in our continued discussion of this issue, and we are certain that the debate will culminate in the adoption of an appropriate decision.

I should like now to comment on certain aspects of the question on which specific measures could be envisaged.

First and foremost, there are the aspects relating to a question of principle, namely compliance by the parties to an armed conflict with their commitments not to target civilians, including children, and not to impede or block access to or delivery of humanitarian aid and assistance. The need to fulfil those commitments is part of the framework of respect for the rules of humanitarian law, which were rightly developed to be used in times of war.

In this regard, measures could be considered to exert pressure on the parties to an armed conflict to oblige them to fulfil their commitments, particularly vis-à-vis children, including the suspension of all assistance to parties to an armed conflict who violate the fundamental rights of children, public condemnation of such acts and the imposition of sanctions on those who profit from ongoing conflicts.

The second aspect of concern to my delegation relates to the effects of sanctions resulting from conflicts and which seriously affect that fragile component of society — children. While we reaffirm the importance of the Security Council's current study of sanctions in general, it is highly desirable that we respond urgently to the alarming plight of children in countries targeted by sanctions. In this regard, we endorse the Secretary-General's recommendation that, before sanctions are imposed, the Security Council should assess their impact on the civilian population, and children in particular, both in the targeted countries and in neighbouring and third countries.

In conclusion, we remain convinced that finding a remedy to this situation will require concerted, common, coordinated and sustained action. That action will be crowned by the desired success only if adequate resources are mobilized. We appeal to the international community to give the necessary priority to assistance in this area.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour today to speak on behalf of the European Union. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey join in this statement.

I wish first to thank the Jamaican presidency for convening this discussion on children in armed conflict. Allow me, in my turn, to pay tribute to the presence among us of Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, who has been engaged courageously and creatively in the field for two years in a remarkable effort to inform, persuade and prevent. I thank him for his briefing and his eloquence, which fully reflect his convictions.

I also pay tribute to Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), whose expertise and tireless action do credit to the United Nations system. UNICEF's informed, precise and lucid reports are valuable tools for each of us, the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. I would emphasize the high quality of her statement.

The European Union welcomes the fact that the entire United Nations system and its various organizations and bodies are serving the interests and rights of children. The European Union calls for this cooperation to continue.

May I, however, express one regret at this stage? The European Union would have liked a little more

time to study the substantive report submitted to us today under paragraph 20 of resolution 1261 (1999) on children in armed conflict. This report of the Secretary-General, which is of high quality, contains many recommendations. These 55 recommendations deserve thorough study. They will be studied in the appropriate ways and by the competent bodies.

Many speakers have taken the floor and many others will do so. I shall therefore limit my remarks to a few comments addressing the heart of the concerns and thinking of the European Union.

First, this debate is again welcome. This debate is again necessary. It follows on the fruitful discussions that the Council has been organizing for the past two years. It is natural that the Security Council should pursue and endow it with its full scope. The role and mission of the Security Council is to address subjects and situations that are often tragic. It is called on to prevent threats to peace, to halt or avert the outbreak of wars and to re-establish conditions for a restoration of peace when they have been disrupted.

And yet, among its prerogatives under the Charter, there is one that should flow from all the others, prompt us to assume greater obligations and require even more sustained will and perseverance of every member of the Council. That mission is to prevent, at all times and in all places, the primary targeting of children as victims of conflict or war.

Here, the Secretary-General's conclusion is devastating and his pen seems to employ every shade of blackest ink in describing the situation of children. A few figures suffice: 13 million children have been displaced by war; between 8,000 and 10,000 children are mine victims; between 1986 and 1996, armed conflicts have killed 2 million children, wounded 6 million and traumatized 10 million. I have not even touched on sexual violence, torture, mutilation or children recruited by force and condemned to being child soldiers.

Secondly, one cannot separate the plight of children from the root causes and chains of events that underlie the conflicts which claim children as their first victims. That is why today's debate is a natural continuation of that which took place in the Council last week on the prevention of conflicts. The best way to prevent conflicts is to tackle their underlying causes. With respect to children, we must emphasize the promotion of their rights. Education, protection, integration, access to knowledge and social and civil guarantees are the principles governing the protection of children. It is our job to ensure respect for these principles and norms with the greatest determination and vigilance.

Thirdly, it is fortunate that we are not starting these deliberations from scratch. In its resolution 1261 (1999), adopted unanimously last year, the Security Council solemnly undertook a commitment to and responsibility for those children who suffer the violence of war. The Council committed itself to paying particular attention to the protection, well-being and rights of children when it is called upon to take measures aimed at promoting peace and security.

As is often the case, that important undertaking, with a year's hindsight, seems nearly self-evident. Some have been surprised that the Council did not take up such a tragically urgent subject earlier. Indeed, the Council serves peace insofar as it ensures the most disadvantaged among us the protection and vigilance that their weakness requires. Is there any need to prove that the Council, in its area of competence, has always been concerned by this aspect and never underestimated it? In any case, that concern is enshrined positively and formally in a resolution.

It is too early to take stock of the implementation of resolution 1261 (1999). I observe, however, that the idea of paying particular attention to the protection of children is duly taken into account in the work, texts and decisions of the Security Council, as the resolution requires us to do.

I shall cite only the two recent examples of resolution 1291 (2000), strengthening the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and resolution 1270 (1999), establishing the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone. Those two resolutions stress the importance of providing personnel whose actions take humanitarian law and the law relating to the protection of children into account. This is a step in the right direction. These developments must be encouraged and supported by all the actors of the international system. In resolution 1261 (1999), the Security Council demonstrated its commitment to taking into account, when exercising its competencies, the well-being and protection of children during the phases of re-establishing, maintaining and building peace. The European Union welcomes the

priority that the Council attaches to designing policies on behalf of children in armed conflict.

Fourthly, beyond general guidelines and recommendations — beyond the integration of the protection of children into peacekeeping operations and the specific provisions and programmes that parties to a conflict are called on take into account and implement — the European Union believes it fundamental that follow-up and monitoring be carried out on the basis of the commitments undertaken by States or armed groups to the protection of children.

While it is essential that the Council include in the mandates of peacekeeping and peace-restoration operations provisions on the protection of children and the safeguarding of their rights, it is no less crucial that those provisions not remain dead letters. It would be highly regrettable for the Council to adopt special measures to protect children without requiring follow-up and evaluation.

Here, the European Union welcomes the fact that in his reports to the Council the Secretary-General devotes special attention to problems relating to the protection of children. Such information must be systematic, whether it relates to disarmament, to demobilization or to rehabilitation programmes.

Sometimes there are fortunate sequences of events in international relations. Last year, we marked the tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is a basic, nearly universal text. Two protocols have now supplemented that legal structure, one of which relates to the subject before the Council today. The European Union welcomed the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The European Union played an active role throughout the difficult negotiations leading to the adoption of the Protocol.

Let me highlight three elements of the Optional Protocol, which supplemented and developed the provisions of the 1989 Convention in a major way: the minimum age for compulsory recruitment or direct participation in hostilities was raised from 15; the States parties to the Protocol were called upon to raise the minimum age for voluntary recruitment and to provide special protections and safeguards for those under 18; and the provisions and measures contained in the Protocol categorically prohibit the recruitment or use in hostilities of anyone under 18. The Protocol strengthens international norms; it calls on parties to conflicts, including armed groups, to commit themselves to respect for the rules guaranteeing that the rights of children will be respected.

I have no doubt that the Millennium Assembly will duly hail the adoption of the Protocol. I urge the greatest possible number of States to sign the Protocol during the Millennium Summit, as those States members of the European Union that have not yet done so are planning to do.

In speaking of the European Union's assessment and analysis of the question of children in armed conflict, I should like to stress the problem of small arms and the question of sanctions. The international community must first of all address the factors that exacerbate the harm done to children. One of these is access to weapons, in particular small arms and light weapons. The technical enhancement of such weapons, their light weight and their ease of use make it simpler for children to use them. That is why the European Union considers that the international community must take coordinated action on the priority issue of protocols to be required for their sale and transfer. I will not dwell on the measures to be implemented at the national, regional and international levels, but will mention only the enhancement of national legal and regulatory frameworks, the campaign against illicit trafficking, and the strengthening of controls on legal trade, including through the marking of weapons.

The European Union has adopted a code of conduct on arms exports and a Joint Action on small arms. The European Union actively supports the preparation and convening in 2001 of a United Nations conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

Although it is necessary to deal with factors that exacerbate the plight of children in armed conflict, it is necessary also to assess precisely the consequences of measures that the international community takes in imposing sanctions against Governments or armed groups. The European Union takes attentive note of the analysis in the report of the Secretary-General of the unintended consequences of sanctions, of which hundreds of thousands of children are victims. The European Union believes that it is up to the Security Council and the Secretary-General to assess, systematically and regularly, the humanitarian impact

of sanctions on civilian populations, including on children.

I wish finally to raise the matter of uprooted and displaced children. The first images of conflicts that come to us are often those of children wandering the roads, separated from their families or abandoned in makeshift shelters. The European Union attaches special importance to the needs and security of children displaced within their own countries, and to assisting them. It is especially important for the parties to a conflict to fulfil their obligations and allow humanitarian organizations unimpeded, safe access to displaced children. Here, the European Union recalls the importance of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, especially as they relate to children.

Those were the main thoughts I wished briefly to place before the Council on behalf of the European Union. International relations comprise both norms and practices. Today's debate enables us to stress the development of the norms that define and guarantee the rights of children in armed conflict; here I am thinking of Security Council resolution 1261 (1999) and, first and foremost, of the Optional Protocol formulated last January. In terms of practices, we have today's Security Council debate; the Council must fully play its role in encouraging and making recommendations to ensure respect for the norms and principles on children in armed conflicts, which it is our duty to protect.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Jamaica.

I wish to join other delegations in expressing appreciation to the Deputy Secretary-General and especially to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and to the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for their important statements, which set the framework for today's debate.

We wish also to thank the Secretary-General for his far-reaching and comprehensive report (S/2000/712), which constitutes a new and important contribution to the body of information on the plight of children in armed conflict. The four years which have passed since the Graça Machel report on the impact of armed conflict on children (A/51/306) have allowed for serious assessment and for the establishment of a number of innovative and practical initiatives aimed at protecting children exposed to armed conflict.

It is in that context that my delegation salutes the innovative and dynamic approach adopted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Olara Otunnu, since his appointment, as well as the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Carol Bellamy, and the staff of UNICEF for their demonstrated commitment to improving the conditions of disadvantaged children across the globe.

Nevertheless, 10 years after the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in the face of numerous international legal norms and standards for the protection of children, children are still being killed, maimed, used as combatants and uprooted from home and community in conditions of extreme deprivation.

In view of that tragic reality and its implications for international peace and security, the Jamaican delegation deemed it important for the Security Council to revisit the issue of the protection of children in armed conflict, which was a hallmark of Namibia's presidency of the Council in August 1999. Jamaica strongly believes that this issue, which must remain a priority for the international community, requires our most effective responses. We also strongly believe that there are several identifiable steps to be taken in the pre-conflict and post-conflict phases and during conflicts themselves in order to address the plight of children in an integrated and comprehensive manner.

First, addressing the plight of children in the most effective manner requires that attention be given to the prevention of armed conflicts. We agree with the Secretary-General that the best way to reduce the harm done to children is to prevent armed conflicts in the first place.

Addressing the root causes of conflict must, therefore, be a priority for the international community. There can be no real, effective substitute for addressing the economic, social and humanitarian circumstances that fuel children's recruitment and participation in armed conflict. The international community must also ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and encourage specially designated post-conflict peace-building and rehabilitation programmes, which will effectively reduce the likelihood of the re-emergence of armed conflict.

The promotion of a culture of adherence to humanitarian norms and standards is therefore of critical importance, especially in the light of the

increased violations of international humanitarian law in conflict situations. A vital component of any effective strategy must involve clear efforts by States to end current levels of impunity by prosecuting those who deliberately violate the rights of children. Innovative approaches must be identified, and in this regard the Secretary-General's recommendation that genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and other egregious crimes perpetrated against children should be excluded from amnesty provisions contemplated during peace negotiations is worthy of our consideration.

It is equally important that appropriate monitoring and reporting mechanisms be established to ensure the compliance of armed groups and non-State actors. The challenge of developing clear and appropriate strategies to protect children during conflict must be addressed through cooperative and comprehensive approaches involving the participation of a wide range of actors. Initiatives by the United Nations system must be accompanied by better and more effective cooperation and coordination with regional and subregional bodies, multilateral donors and international non-governmental organizations. This approach is essential, particularly in combating the illicit trade in small arms and the illegal exploitation of and trade in natural resources.

A ground-breaking regional initiative was the adoption by the Economic Community of West African States in Accra in April this year of the Declaration on war-affected children. We encourage and support such initiatives. My delegation also believes that the protection of the rights and interests of refugee and internally displaced children is especially compelling. The international community must provide additional resources for nutrition, health care, the education of internally displaced children and refugees and family reunification. This must be accompanied by improved training and sensitization of peacekeepers and humanitarian personnel.

The post-conflict phase of armed conflicts remains one of the most crucial stages in the protection of children. The Secretary-General's report emphasizes that special attention must be given to the educational, psychosocial, health and economic needs of children in these situations. Education is of special importance, as most of the children being prepared for reintegration into society lack basic education and are thus constrained in their ability to contribute as future productive citizens. Former child soldiers remaining idle in disarmament and demobilization camps without appropriate training and education are likely to be induced to return to armed groups.

The international community, donors and non-governmental organizations must together invest greater levels of resources in peace-building activities and demobilization and reintegration, taking into account the needs of such former child soldiers. We also believe that the special vulnerabilities of girls must be taken into account, not only in conflict situations, but also in the design of post-conflict rehabilitation programmes.

While it is important that this debate has allowed us to identify several practical steps that can be taken by the Security Council and the United Nations system to advance the cause of children, the process of consultation must continue if reasonable success is to be achieved. This work will be carried forward at the Winnipeg Conference on War-affected Children, to be held in September this year, and by next year's special session of the General Assembly for follow-up of the World Summit for Children.

If we agree that children have a right to peace and a right to grow and develop in a safe and secure environment, the international community must act to ensure their security. The Security Council, which is seized with maintaining international peace and security, has a responsibility to help in providing a legal framework within which the rights of children are protected in situations of armed conflict. Resolution 1261 (1999) was an important beginning, on which we must continue to build. The many tools which we have at our disposal must be used judiciously to further advance the security and protection of children.

My delegation hopes that the draft resolution that this Council will formulate on the basis of the Secretary-General's report and today's debate will demonstrate the intention of the international community to move from words to deeds.

I now resume my function as President of the Council.

There are a number of speakers remaining on my list. In view of the lateness of the hour, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, I intend to suspend the meeting now.

The meeting was suspended at 1.10 p.m.